

THE STORMS OF ARGUS

A Scenario For STAR LEGION: The Game of the Space Opera

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THE STORMS OF ARGUS

By Christopher G. Adams

THE PREMISE: The players are the captain and senior officers of the Patrol Cruiser *Landrum*, assigned to a sector on the fringes of human space near the border with the Vla-Hachchee, a hostile race of nasty insectoids. There have been several border skirmishes with the Vla-Hachchee in the past ten years, but so far open warfare has been avoided.

THE SETUP: The *Landrum* is in port at Rolton 7 for minor repairs and crew R&R when the captain is contacted by Admiral Hegett and given new, secret orders. The admiral informs the captain that a certain "Mr. Jones" will be joining them. Mr. Jones is with the Galactic Cosmography Institute (GCI) and that one of their robo-probes has crash-landed on the planet Argus, very near to the Vla-Hachchee border. The probe contains vital data on stellar phenomenon in the sector, and must be retrieved. The *Landrum* and crew are instructed to assist Mr. Jones in any way possible in addition to seeing him safely to Argus. Jones arrives at the spaceport shortly after the crew has received their orders. He is a rather unremarkable man in drab clothing and packing a number of briefcase sized boxes of "special equipment" associated with the probe, including a subspace homing receiver calibrated to the probe's beacon. Jones is not a very sociable man, and will in fact tell the captain that he is to be left alone and that the captain and crew have their orders.

STRANGE, NEW WORLDS: Argus is a very odd planet. The sole moon of a super-jovian gas giant known as Colossus, which is in tight orbit around a white dwarf star, the world is in constant upheaval from volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Argus itself is caught in a gravitational tug-of-war between the star and the planet, and sits in a raging storm of matter streaming down to the star from the atmosphere of Colossus. Approaching and landing on Argus is going to be no easy job.

GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN: The voyage to the Argus-Colossus system is uneventful. The players will probably try to gain more information from Jones who will not divulge anything. In fact, he may even become openly hostile towards those who exhibit undue curiosity about his mission. The *Landrum* will have to drop out of FTL drive farther out from Argus than is normal due to the violent nature of the system. Jones will have his subspace receiver set up and will be providing the approach coordinates to Argus. Play up the tension as the ship glides in toward the maelstrom, making the players roll often on technical and piloting skills, all the while Jones is insisting on expediting the mission. As the ship plunges into the matter storm approaching Argus orbit, a power fluctuation momentarily knocks out the navigation scanners. The scanners come back on line just in time for the pilot to see a house-sized chunk of ice and rock off the port bow. No matter how desperately the pilot tries to evade, it is too late. A tremendous collision occurs; the lights flicker, control boards burst with sparks, there is a horrible rending sound of tearing metal and plassteel and the ship lurches sickeningly. It will take all the skills of the crew and a little luck to pull the *Landrum* out of a spiraling plunge toward the hellish surface of Argus and make a more-or-less safe landing. As the crew begins damage control and repair of the *Landrum*, Mr. Jones is ready to begin searching for the probe. It is assumed that the players will split up at this point, with some staying on the *Landrum* to oversee the repair efforts and some, including the captain, accompanying Jones. This is all right, as both groups will have their hands full. In spite of the rather undignified landing, the ship was heading toward the coordinates given by Jones and his receiver and has ended up only about 100 kilometers from the anticipated impact point of the probe. The *Landrum's* ATV will be able to reach the site in less than two hours.

THE VLA-HACHCHEE ARRIVE: About an hour after the ATV departs to look for the probe, one of the duty technicians reports detecting multiple contacts in orbit. A quick check of the data will reveal that they are Vla-Hachchee corsairs, two of them, and each one the equal of the *Landrum* in firepower. While one of the corsairs takes up position in orbit, the other heads down to the surface directly toward the *Landrum*, landing about 100 meters away and dispatches ground troops (sturdiness 2, shooting 1, Brawling 2, blood 12) to take up positions surrounding the cruiser. The *Landrum*, by this time, should be in fair shape with most major systems on line; however, a firefight at these odds is a no-win situation and the players should understand that. Never the less, they will probably be armed and have taken up countering positions. The Vla-Hachchee leader, Glotara-Xem, will contact the players quickly to demand that the probe be turned over to them.

THE TRUTH: No doubt the crew on the *Landrum* will contact the ATV with word of the Vla-Hachchee's arrival. It is at this point that Jones will open up and reveal the true nature of his mission. Jones is, in fact, an agent of the Terran Secrete Service and the probe in question is a spy probe sent deep into Vla-Hachchee space to monitor and record their strategic communication system. The data in the probe's memory is a vital blow to the Vla-Hachchee strategic command and virtually assures that they will be unable to launch an attack against terran interests for some time. Jones is very adamant that the probe not fall into the enemy's hands; so much so that he has brought along a compact nuclear bomb and will not hesitate to use it as a last resort. The probe is relatively easy to locate and recover, but now the ATV must get back to the *Landrum*...

FINALE: The Vla-Hachchee are unaware that the ATV has the probe, or the nuke. The crew on the *Landrum* may not know about the probe's true nature. And don't forget about the second corsair in orbit. Glotara-Xem is interested only in ensuring that the probe data not make it to Earth. If the probe is turned over, or if the Vla-Hachchee manage to grab it, he will order his men off and leave. Also, if the probe were somehow destroyed, he will call off his troops and leave. Aside from these possibilities, Glotara-Xem will destroy the *Landrum* and crew if necessary to ensure that the probe's data never falls into terran hands.